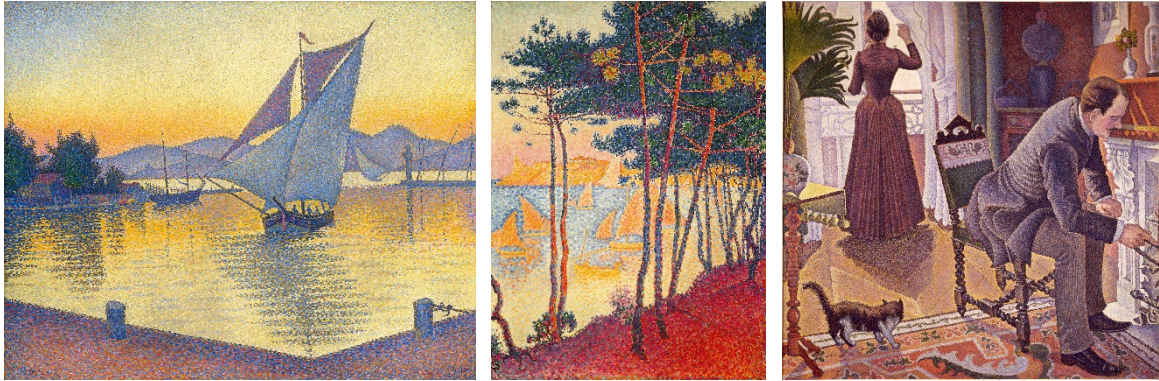


press release

KUNSTHAL ROTTERDAM



Second press release, 15 July 2026

Signac. Symphony of Colours

Kunsthal Rotterdam presents an extensive exhibition of work by Paul Signac and his contemporaries

24 October 2026 to 28 February 2027

He was a painter, theorist, and networker, as well as the driving force behind the innovative, 19th-century art movement Neo-Impressionism. From Saturday 24 October 2026, Kunsthal Rotterdam will be dedicating a large-scale retrospective to Paul Signac (1863–1935). With over ninety works by Signac and some of his contemporaries, *Signac. Symphony of Colours* shows his wide-ranging influence and explores why his work and ideas continue to find resonance to this day.

Visitors can follow Signac's development through lively port views, colourful landscapes, and carefully composed portraits. One of the highlights is the sun-drenched painting *Le Port au soleil couchant*, Opus 236 (1892). Also displayed is *Le port de Rotterdam* (1907), inspired by a visit to the Netherlands. The exhibition furthermore zooms in on the key role Signac played in the Neo-Impressionist movement, not only as a painter, but also as a writer, ambassador, collector, and mentor. By inspiring young artists and organising exhibitions, he played an active role in extending the international outreach of Neo-Impressionism. Apart from around thirty works by Signac himself, the exhibition features paintings by artists like Lucie Cousturier, Henri-Edmond Cross, Curt Herrmann, Maximilien Luce, Camille Pissarro, Théo van Rysselberghe, Jeanne Selmersheim-Desgrange, Georges Seurat, and Jan Toorop.

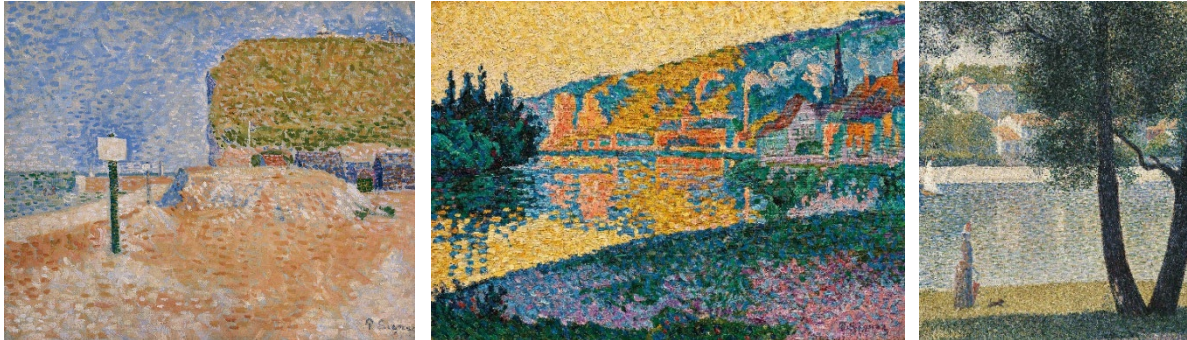
Signac as a key figure

The exhibition allows visitors to discover how Neo-Impressionism evolved during the 1880s, with Signac and fellow-painter Seurat as key figures. It also pays attention to the network of artists they moved around in, and zooms in on the ideological principles underpinning Neo-Impressionism: this style of painting was used to express utopian ideals. Special attention is paid to the landscapes Signac and his fellow artists painted around the Mediterranean, where

the intense sunlight gave them a new awareness of the power of colour. By way of conclusion the exhibition retraces Signac's international influence, which also reached Dutch artists.

'This exhibition offers visitors a unique opportunity to become acquainted with Signac, whose work is famous around the world. Having served as the source of inspiration for his famous port view, Rotterdam is the perfect location for this. We are especially grateful to Museum Barberini in Potsdam for this collaboration, as their outstanding collection of Neo-Impressionist art has enabled us to bring together an unprecedented number of top quality artworks.'

– Marianne Splint, Kunsthall director



From left to right:

- Paul Signac, *Fecamp. Soleil*, 1886, private collection
- Paul Signac, *Les Andelys. Soleil couchant*, 1886, private collection
- Georges Seurat, *La Seine à Courbevoie*, 1885, Archives Signac, Paris

Scientific colour theories

Following Seurat's untimely death in 1891, Signac continued to tirelessly dedicate himself to promoting the ideological principles of Neo-Impressionism. The artists who were active in this movement drew on strict, scientific colour theories. Instead of mixing the various colours, the painters applied unmixed paint in dots and strokes right next to each other, thereby encouraging the eye of the spectator to optically blend the colours. This working method is also known as pointillism. Complementary colours – orange next to blue, red next to green – enhance each other, resulting in a vivid, vibrating effect.

Harmony as an ideal

Signac applied this style to various genres, for example to portraits in which the characters, their clothing, and their environment almost seem to merge. However, Neo-Impressionism turned out to be even more effective in capturing nature, with sky, land, and sea seamlessly blending into each other. Depictions like these reiterated the ideals of the pointillists: it was their way of speaking out against advancing industrialisation. Moreover, these pastoral scenes also reflected the need for social justice and harmony.

Ports, sailing ships, and seascapes

Signac was a passionate sailor. Exploring the European coastline by ship, he sailed from Normandy and Brittany to Belgian and Dutch ports, and even to the Southern Mediterranean. These influences are clearly visible in this work: ports, sailing ships, and

seascapes are at the heart of his oeuvre. He was especially inspired by the time he spent in Saint-Tropez, which at that time was still a quiet town. Here his pointillist style of painting proved perfect for capturing the glistening sunlight on the water, as is obvious from paintings like *Le Port au soleil couchant, Opus 236 (Saint-Tropez)* from 1892.



From left to right:

- Paul Signac, *Moulin d'Edam*, 1896, Hasso Plattner Foundation, Potsdam
- Paul Signac, *Le port de Rotterdam*, 1907, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
- Jan Toorop, *Les deux saules ('Novemberzon')*, 1889, Kunstmuseum Den Haag

Signac and the Netherlands

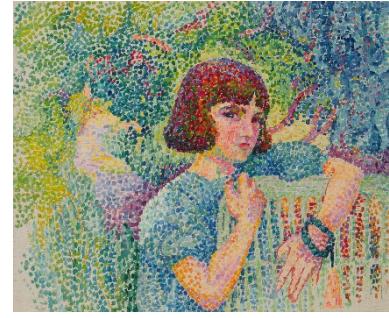
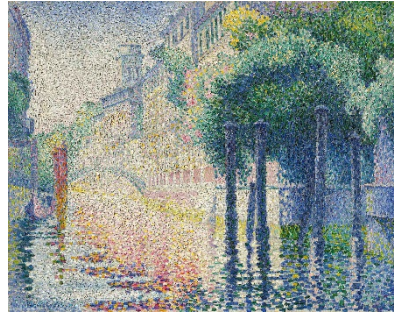
Signac visited the Netherlands on several occasions. The port of Rotterdam inspired him to paint multiple large canvasses, including the masterpiece *Le port de Rotterdam* (1907), on display in the exhibition. He was also impressed by the polders, ports, and cloudy skies in places like Amsterdam, Dordrecht, and Volendam. He furthermore painted the mill of Edam and the jetty at Vlissingen. His work served as an important source of inspiration for Dutch painter Jan Toorop (1858–1928), who introduced Neo-Impressionism in his own country. Various paintings by Toorop, including the 1889 work *Les deux saules ('Novemberzon')*, are featured in the exhibition.

National and international network

Signac's contribution to art history transcends his own work. He was able to build a national and international network of painters, critics, and collectors. The exhibition showcases work by Belgian artists Alfred William Finch, Henry van de Velde, and Théo van Rysselberghe, who were all strongly influenced by his style of painting. Van Rysselberghe's famous 1896 portrait *Paul Signac at the Helm of the Olympia* is among these works. Also shown in the exhibition are works by female Neo-Impressionist artists such as Anna Boch, Lucie Cousturier, and Jeanne Selmersheim-Desgrange, whose importance to the movement has thus far been largely ignored.

International collaboration

Signac. Symphony of Colours features over ninety works from around thirty international collections, including Musée d'Orsay in Paris, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, and Archives Signac in Paris. The exhibition is realised in collaboration with Museum Barberini in Potsdam.



From left to right:

- Théo van Rysselberghe, *Paul Signac at the helm of the Olympia*, 1896, Archives Signac, Paris
- Henri-Edmond Cross, *Rio San Trovaso Venise*, 1903-1904, private collection
- Jeanne Selmersheim-Desgrange, *Portrait of Colette*, ca. 1907, CFC Collection

Comprehensive catalogue

To accompany the exhibition, a lavishly illustrated English-language catalogue will appear, with new essays by authors like Marina Ferretti Bocquillon, co-author of Signac's catalogue raisonné, and Charlotte Hellman Cachin, Signac's great-granddaughter and director of Archives Signac in Paris. Other contributors are Nerina Santorius, Joris Westerink, Elke Linda Buchholz, Julia Keinath, Valentina Plotnikova, Richard Thomson, and Jean-Rémi Touzet. The essays zoom in on themes like the origins of Neo-Impressionism, the movement's political backgrounds, Signac's sense of colour, and the reception of Signac's work.

Invitation to press preview

The press preview of the exhibition *Signac. Symphony of Colours* will take place on Friday 23 October at 11:00 hrs in the presence of Kunsthall curator Joris Westerink and guest curators from Museum Barberini. Members of the press who would like to attend the press preview and the official opening on Friday evening can send an e-mail to communicatie@kunsthall.nl, specifying the media outlet they work for.

Photo captions of the header from left to right:

- Paul Signac, *Voiliers et pins*, 1896, Archives Signac, Paris
- Paul Signac, *Le Port au soleil couchant, Opus 236*, 1892, Hasso Plattner Foundation, Potsdam
- Paul Signac, *Dimanche*, 1888-1890, Archives Signac, Paris

→ For more press information and/or photographic material, please contact Kunsthall Rotterdam's communication department: Anne van den Dool, t. +31 (0)10-4400323, +31 (0)6-81052747; Sabine Parmentier t. +31 (0)10- 4400321, +31 (0)6-52636232; communicatie@kunsthall.nl

→ In case of publication, please mention: info +31 (0)10-4400301, www.kunsthall.nl, opening hours: Tuesdays – Sundays 10:00 – 17:00 hrs.

About Kunsthall Rotterdam

Kunsthall Rotterdam is one of the Netherlands' leading cultural institutes, situated in the Museumpark in Rotterdam. Designed by the renowned architect Rem Koolhaas in 1992, the Kunsthall has seven different exhibition spaces. The Kunsthall annually presents a varied

programme consisting of over 20 exhibitions. As visitors are always able to visit multiple concurrent exhibitions, the Kunsthall can offer them an adventurous journey through different worlds and art movements. Culture for a wide audience, from modern-day masters and contemporary art to overlooked cultures, photography, fashion, and design. The exhibitions are accompanied by an extensive programme of activities.

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